



1996

"Let Freedom Ring" Brochure Draft

SEAALL

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SEAALL, ""Let Freedom Ring" Brochure Draft" (1996). *Government Relations Committee*. 16.
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Electronic Addresses

E-mail Addresses

President Clinton
president@whitehouse.gov

Vice-President Gore
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Web sites and e-mail address directories

Senate
(includes a directory of e-mail addresses)
<http://www.senate.gov>

House of Representatives
(includes a directory of e-mail addresses)
<http://www.house.gov>

The President's Cabinet
http://www1.whitehouse.gov/WH/Cabinet_links.html

Independent Federal Agencies and Commissions
http://www1.whitehouse.gov/WH/Independent_Agencies/html/indepen

Judicial Branch
<http://fjc.gov>

Library of Congress
Thomas (Legislative Information on the Internet)
<http://thomas.loc.gov>

Four11
(free internet white page directory)
<http://www.four11.com>



Correct address, Salutation and Closing

President

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President

Very respectfully yours,

Vice-President

The Vice-President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Vice-President

Sincerely yours,

Senator

The Honorable John Doe
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Doe:

Representative

The Honorable John/Jane Doe
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Mr./Ms. Doe:

Cabinet Member

The Honorable John/Jane Doe
The Secretary of

Dear Mr./Madame Secretary:

D-R-A-F-T

Let Freedom Ring

Intellectual Freedom is both our right as American citizens, and our responsibility as professional librarians. The right is guaranteed by the First and Fourteenth Amendments. The responsibility has been attendant upon us as professionals since 1948, when the American Library Association adopted the Library Bill of Rights. Our freedom of expression and our "right to know" will not perpetuate itself on the basis of history. It is protected only so long as we are willing to focus our energy and our concern on information access issues.

As our profession and our nation enters the "Information Age", access to information in all its formats takes on renewed importance. We must take an active role in facilitating the exchange of information and ideas, or risk losing the ground we have gained.

Our involvement in information legislation, through our elected representatives, will help to safeguard our intellectual freedom now and preserve this freedom for those who come after us.

Southeastern Chapter of
The American Association of Law Libraries
Governmental Relations Committee

Information is power; knowledge is power.

We can empower ourselves as Americans and as librarians by working with our elected officials to help insure the free flow of library materials and access to information in all its formats. If we are not part of the solution, we are part of the problem. We have a choice: we can work with our Legislators to promote and protect our intellectual freedom, or we can be silent on critical issues. If we choose not to act, we lose the right to complain.

Let's choose to act!

Write a letter. Pay a visit. Voice/vote your concerns on information issues. Let freedom ring, for our present and for our future.

Letters

A letter is one of the most effective means to convey your opinions and beliefs to your elected Representatives. Letters do not necessarily have to follow a particular style; they can be formal or informal, typewritten or legibly handwritten. Form letters are also acceptable, especially if they contain a handwritten note of explanation. An effective letter states the issue, provides good examples to support your point of view and, most of all is free of unnecessary verbiage and emotional outpouring. Whenever appropriate use letterhead paper; otherwise use a good quality writing paper. Using a fax to send your letter can insure that the letter is received in a timely manner.

Personal Visits

A personal visit can be a very powerful means of voicing your opinions. Be sure to make an appointment in advance of your visit. If your representative is not available then you should discuss your concerns with a member of his/her staff. Staff can be quite knowledgeable and they will brief the Representative of their contacts with constituents. Make sure that you are well informed about the issues. Be sure to leave your card and any written information you have prepared. Follow up your personal contact with a thank you letter.

Telephone Calls

A telephone call to your Representative's office can be a very effective means of expressing your views even if your Representative is not available. Staff log the nature of the calls received, and they are interested in hearing your view point on current issues. Try to time your call so that it will have the most impact.

E-mail

One of the most popular ways of communication today is electronic mail or "e-mail". If your Representative has an e-mail account it is extremely convenient to send a message in support or in opposition to proposed legislation. There are many resources available to find out if a Legislator has an e-mail account. Some Representatives have established discussion group lists to keep his/her constituents informed. It is suggested that you do not use all capital letters when communicating via e-mail because it can be perceived as the equivalent of shouting.

World Wide Web

The World Wide Web or "Web" is that portion of the Internet that has the ability to link information resources and to combine text, images and sound. By using a browser or netscape, you will be able to explore resources at Web sites that contain a wealth of information for the U.S. Supreme Court decisions to federal and state legislation. You may access the Web through your online services provider.

Suggestions for effective Communication

- Use the proper form of salutation and closing.
- Include your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address.
- Be brief and to the point.
- Know the issues.
- Support your opinion with examples and reasons.
- Be informative and specific.
- Be courteous and reasonable.
- Do not be rude or threatening.

Be assured each communication will be logged by staff, and often the sentiments expressed will provide information (topic and volume) to enable your Representative to interpret the opinions of his/her constituents, and even determine his/her approach on a given piece of legislation.

It is all right to communicate your opinions to a committee member, if your representative is not on the committee; however, do send a copy to your representative. Even though it is frowned upon to contact a Representative other than your own, at times it may be expedient to do so. In this case, send a copy with a note of explanation to your Representative.

Courtesy ought to be observed, as should common sense when expressing your concerns and opinions.